

The Tulalip Tribes Cultural Stories Project: Recording and Using Traditional Knowledge for Cultural Landscape Recovery, Watershed Management and Salmon Protection

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Tulalip Natural Resources

Abstract

Over the past two decades, the Tulalip Tribes have embarked on a program to manage and restore their watersheds and protect and recover habitat for salmon. For indigenous peoples, any environmental restoration involves biocultural restoration, since the culture cannot be separated from the land. The Cultural Stories Project has been developed to complement the biophysical models the Tulalip developed for watershed management. The project uses interviews with elders to document the cultural and traditional uses of resources and their importance to Tulalip Tribal members. These are used to characterize historical cultural landscapes and resources, their perceived current state, and the future desired states. This information is correlated against historical accounts from the literature and scientific documentation, and these are integrated with the biophysical watershed models to establish goals for restoration efforts. We describe the methodology for this process, some of the software tools developed for managing traditional knowledge, and issues concerning privacy, knowledge protection, and the use of indigenous knowledge in interaction with external federal, state and municipal agencies involved in watershed management and Pacific salmon endangered species protection. Finally, we explore the importance of this process for the cultural health and well-being of the Tulalip Tribes and their homeland.